

A N
EPISTLE
T O
FRIENDS

Concerning
The Present and Succeeding TIMES:

B E I N G

A faithful Exhortation and Warning to all Friends,
who profess the TRUTH, to beware of the
manifold Wiles of the Enemy, and to stand armed
in the Light of the LORD GOD of Heaven and
Earth, against his Assaults, that so they may
be ready to answer the Call and Requirings
of the LORD.

A L S O,

Something signified of the Misery of the Succeeding
Times, that all may be prepared, and that the
evil Day may not overtake any unawares, but
such as turn away their Ear from COUNSEL.

By one who is a Traveller in the Way of Peace, and
hath Goodwill towards all Men, and more especially
to the Household of Faith; STEPHEN CRISP.

*Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit saith to the
Churches. Rev. ii.*

L O N D O N:

Re-printed by LUKE HINDE, 1757.

AN EPISTLE TO FRIENDS

The Present and Succeeding Times.



A British Exhibition is opening to all Friends who profess to be aware of the manifold Wiles of Satan, and to stand armed in the light of the Word of God of Heaven and Earth, against his Assaults, that to them may be ready to answer the Call and Requirements of the Lord.

ALSO

Something desired of the Ministry of the Succeeding Times, that all may be prepared, and that the Evil Day may not overcome any unwares, but such as rush away their Feet from Couster.

By one who is a Traveller in the Way of Peace, and hath Goodwill towards all Men, and more especially to the Household of Faith, STEPHEN CRISP.

Let him that hath an Ear, hear what the Spirit saith to the Church. Rev. M.

L O N D O N :

Re-printed by B. & H. 1837.

THE PREFACE.

THE first of the ensuing Tracts is republished at the Request of several Friends, who thought it might be of Service to settle the Minds of many in these unstable Times, and incline them to look home to that Rock which has been, is, and will be, the only Safety for the Righteous, in all the Storms and Trials of every kind which may attend them in this Life; and notwithstanding it was published in the Author's * Works, yet they being long since out of Print, it can be come at but by a few; and though a small Part of it is published in William Sewel's † History, yet it was thought necessary to reprint it wholly for more general Service at this Time, wherein there are such Commotions, Wars, and Rumours of Wars in the Earth; and the more so, as it seems to point at these Times, as the Succeeding Times therein mentioned, being written in the Year 1666.

As to the General Epistle printed herewith (which is printed in William Sewel's History, Pag. 628)

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* Crisp's Works, Pag. 117.

† Sewel's History, Pag. 448.

it is reprinted to stir up the Minds of Friends to their Duty, in the Execution of that Christian Discipline which is so necessary to keep the Church clean, the Neglect of which has been one Cause of the Declension which is so apparent at this Day: And notwithstanding there may be some Things in both Epistles, which seem not quite so suitably adapted to the present State of the Church, as they were at those Times wherein they were written, this last Epistle being written in the Year 1690, yet, as the excellent Advice therein given, remains good at all Times, it was concluded to print them entire: And the Reader is desired to make this profitable Use of those Passages, wherein the Increase and Prosperity of the Churches are mentioned, as to enquire in himself, Whether his Conversation has been so conducted by adhering to the divine Teacher, the Grace and Spirit of God; and his Duty towards his Brethren so discharged, by maintaining the Discipline in the Spirit of Love and Charity, as to be no Ways accessary to that Declension which is so much and so justly complained of and lamented.

A N

E P I S T L E

T O

F R I E N D S, concerning the Present and Succeeding T I M E S.

Dear Friends,

YOU whom the Lord hath reached unto in this the Day of his Love, and to whom he hath made known the Way of Truth and Righteousness, through the raising up of that holy living Witness of himself, that long lay hid and buried in you, and hath brought you to a secret feeling of something in yourselves, that is worth the minding and regarding; and the Lord causing this to appear in the Day of your seeking, as a *Light* discovering Darkness and its Power, by which ye were formerly held, and given you by his Spirit a Sense and secret Hope, that in this *Light* the Way of Deliverance was to be attained unto; this Hope made you not ashamed of the *Light* which before you hated, but you came to know and embrace it, even while others still hated it, and you for its sake; yet your Hearts being affected with the Hope that did appear therein, could not but so far join

unto it, as to make publick Profession of it for its own sake, and for no other Ends or Designs, or Interest at all, but with Resolution in that *Light*, to wait for the Salvation of God. *Dear Friends*, it is for you aforementioned, that both now, and for some Days and Weeks, my Heart hath been deeply exercised, even Night and Day; and the Aboundings of the Father's Love do often overcome me, and draw me forth now to say and write these Things unto you, for your Admonition and Establishment. And indeed it is you who did thus rightly own the Way of Truth, and knew your Believing to be the Gift and Mercy of God to your Souls, that I do aim at; for those who have taken up the Profession of the precious Truth, upon By-respects and sinister Ends, and but for Reasons propounded in their carnal Minds, though I do pity them, yet I have not much at this Time to say to them, but this, *The Day shall declare them, and their Garments shall not hide them.*

But you, Oh *my Friends!* who had Fellowship with us in the deep Travels of our Beginnings, and did come to Truth the same Way, and have known the Power and Virtue of it, many Times overcoming you in your inward Man, which hath made you cry out, *Lord, evermore give us of this Bread*; and hath made you as a watered Garden: Oh *Friends!* how shall I express or signify unto you those Longings, those ardent Desires, and earnest Breathings of my Soul, that you, even you, may abide to the End of all Trials, Tribulations, and Adversities, and may inherit that Crown of Immortality which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and may
not

not by any means be bereft thereof; this is singly my Travail in Body and Spirit, that you may be kept and preserved out of all the subtil Snares of the wicked one, who hunts for the Souls, even of those who have believed; and therefore in dear and tender Love I have a few Things to write unto you, for the clearing of my Conscience, and discharging my Duty in the Sight of the Lord; and the Lord give you all a tender and an understanding Heart, that both you and I may yet have Cause daily to praise the Lord in the glorious Light of his Salvation, which he hath manifested among us by the revealing his Son Jesus Christ, to whom belongs Dominion, Honour and Glory, for ever. *Amen.*

And first, *dear Friends*, it is in my Heart to put you in Remembrance of that by which we were called and convinced, which, as a Foundation Principle, was laid in and among you, and it being unchangeable and unalterable in itself, doth therefore admit of no Alteration or Change in those who are rightly kept to it.

It was a *Light* which arose in our Hearts, and shined forth from God the Father of Lights, carrying in its Appearance the Nature and Property of God, both in its condemning Evil, which the Enemy had sown or planted in us, and owning, allowing, and justifying every Thing that was good and honest, just and equal; even those Thoughts in our Hearts which were for turning towards the Lord, and seeking his Righteousness; these Thoughts were justified and encouraged by the *Light*, and all the contrary discovered and judged, as they were brought to it to be tried. Now, this *Light* did our
Souls

Souls rejoice in, as they had good Cause, though it took away our former Rejoicings; our Pleasures in Vanities and Iniquity died, our Glory in this World withered, our Friendship with the Sons of Men decayed, and we stood in the *Light* and saw all these Things, and were not sorry at it, but waited daily to see these Things more and more brought to pass; neither was there a permitting our Thoughts to go out, how we might prevent those Damages, or repair these Losses, but the Cross of Christ was indeed our glorying or rejoicing; and the Hope that was before us, did make us despise the Pleasures, Treasures and Honours, Friendships and Delights of this World; and in those Days you grew into a Feeling of the heavenly Joy, where the Hundred-fold was witnessed in your Bosoms, and the Zeal of the Lord was kindled by his own Spirit in you, against whatsoever this *Light* of Jesus in the Conscience did witness against; and the Lord beheld your Integrity, and blessed you, and multiplied you, and added to your Strength and Stature, and then did the Fruits of this glorious Work abound among you, in three more general and special Effects; by which Effects, or by their Continuance among you, let all now come to search and try themselves, that so, *dear Friends*, those who have continued faithful in them all, may persevere in like manner to the End: And those, who upon true Search do find that they have failed, and fallen short in all or any of them, may make haste to repent, and to turn to that which was the Root of them all, that they may not be found as fruitless and withered Branches in the Day that cometh, lest they be cut off and utterly consumed from

from among the living Branches of the Vine; for a Day cometh that *Truth* will look into the Fig-tree for Fruit, and Leaves will not defend it from the Curse and Blasting.

The three especial Fruits that did spring forth from this blessed Root, and were and are to continue and increase in us, and among us to the End, are these, *viz.*

1. PURITY, manifested in a godly Conversation.
2. UNITY, manifested in dear and tender Love one towards another.
3. FAITHFULNESS, manifested in bearing a constant and faithful Testimony to the Things we had received and believed, though it were unto great Loss and Sufferings.

And against all these doth the wicked one appear, to see if he can make you barren concerning them, and that with divers Wiles and Subtilties, that he may prevail on you, and not be known to be the Enemy, but might so overcome you, as that you might both submit to him, and then plead for him and his Snares and Wiles, as being just, right, lawful, prudent, convenient, &c. But, oh *dear Friends!* let all be watchful and diligent to wait in the Sense and true Feeling of that Seed which never fell nor was beguiled, and you will (even the least of you) see and comprehend his Workings and Transformings, and be delivered from them.

1. PURITY and HOLINESS was a Fruit in you, which doth yet flourish in many (blessed be the Lord) who are as watchful and careful to approve themselves in Obedience to the Light of Truth in their inward Parts, as ever, and find as great a Necessity

cessity both of trying and judging with its Judgment, as ever ; these having thus waited, have renewed their Strength unto this very Day, and do mount up as upon the Wings of an Eagle ; these are neither weary in running, nor faint they in their walking : But alas, *Friends !* even these do know with how great and manifold Assaults they have been assaulted, and know and see with Sorrow of Heart, how the Assault hath prevailed upon some, by working into the Mind a secret Liberty, and supposed Enlargedness, whereby a *Carelesness* hath entred some, and they having no Keeper but the Measure of *Light* revealed in their Hearts and Consciences, so soon as they came to be persuaded to slight the Reproofs of that, they soon erred ; and this supposed Liberty entred, *That now, after so many Years Strictness and Circumspection, they should not need to stand so straitly to try Things and Words as at first, because now a Day of more Liberty was come ;* and this Liberty secretly prevailed against that pure Fear that once was placed in their Hearts, and against the very Obedience of Truth, inwardly in the Subjection of the Mind, and then it became manifest outwardly ; the Actions sometimes blameworthy, the Words and Speech again corrupted, and run into the old Channel of the World, like them again, and the single pure Language, learned in the *Light*, in the Time of their Poverty and Simplicity, almost lost and forgotten, and so the Work of God which he wrought, in a manner laid waste : And then, when this Liberty is entred, and made use of, as aforesaid, oftentimes a secret Subtily ariseth against the Judgment of Truth, either
from

from within, or from some outwardly, who are grieved with this loose and careless kind of speaking or acting, which Subtilty leads to contend for it against the Judgment, telling the Creature, *Why, these Things are but small Things, and little Things, and what, we must not strain at a Gnat, and such like.* Oh, my Friends! beware of these evil Suggestions of the wicked one: How came they to be small and little Things, seeing they were great Things with us in the Beginning? And how comes an Offence in this Nature to be light now, seeing it was heavy in the Beginning? Oh let not the greatest Mercies of our God so fill us, as to make us slight or forget the least Obedience, but rather let the Continuance of his Mercy the more quicken you up unto a Zeal for his Name and Truth in all Things, to be found doing and speaking according to the Rule of Righteousness, which ye learned in the *Light*, in the Day of your being low and little, and then nothing will rise up and be exalted in the Multitude of God's Mercies, but that holy Birth which lives in Purity when it is at highest; and so that Life of Righteousness will shine forth more and more, which glorifies God and seeks his Honour. *Dear Friends,* that ye may be kept so unto the End, is the Breathing and Travel of my Soul: And that where this Neglect hath entred, and this aforesaid Corruption, either in Speech or Action, is to be found, that ye would receive the Word of Exhortation in Meekness and Fear, in which it is written unto you, and may redeem the Time, for the Days are and shall be evil, and none will hold the Mystery of the Faith (which saves from falling in the evil Day)

but

but such as do keep the pure and undefiled Conscience, which none can do, but by persisting and continuing in the daily Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief and Obedience of the Truth.

2. A second Fruit that was brought forth from this good Root, was UNITY and LOVE *one towards another* ; which, blessed be the Lord, is preciouslly preserved in and among many to this very Day, who are so sensible of the divers Operations of Truth in them to be all by one Spirit, that they are still kept of one Heart and Mind, given up freely to serve the Lord in Singleness of Heart in their Generation ; and are in this good Work as Strengtheners and Encouragers of one another ; but notwithstanding the Enemy hath been exceeding busy to lay waste and destroy this blessed Effect also, and that under divers Pretences, which the Lord still discovered by his own Light and Spirit in his People, who have singly waited upon him ; for many have been his Wiles, sometimes fitting and preparing Vessels to rise up in the fleshly and sensual Wisdom, to traduce Friends, and bring in corrupt and evil Doctrines, to try who were not sound in the Faith, that they might draw them aside into an Heat and Zeal for something which had not its Root in the Truth, and which they who abode in the Truth could not own, but judge and condemn in the Name of the Lord. Which, when such saw, they took thereat Occasion of striving to propagate and promote that which they saw withstood ; so having lost Subjection to the Spirit of Truth in themselves, which would have kept them in Unity in the Body ; and having also lost and laid by their Subjection to those

those who were over them in the Lord, they then grew stubborn and wilful, and proceeded in more Zeal for that which stood in Opposition to the Truth, than ever they did for the Truth itself; and these sometimes have prevailed to the subverting whole Households, and have turned several from the Faith and Simplicity which is in the Gospel, who, as well as those that subverted them, have lost the Fellowship of the Saints, and the Savour of Life, both in themselves and others, and then the Enemy persuaded them, *all were dead to the Life but themselves*; and so they grow to have a tickling Joy in what they do and say, in Obedience to that perverse and singular private Spirit, and so grow up to speak evil of Dignities, and are unruly, and dare to speak against Heaven; and them that dwell and inhabit in it, whom God makes to shine as Stars in the Firmament of his Power: But alas for them! my Soul pities them, when I see how they sport themselves with their own Deceivings; but the Day of the Lord is among his People, which hath and doth make them and their Spirits manifest, and their Fruits also have made them manifest.

Another Way that the Enemy seeks to break the Unity, and dissolve the Bond of Amity, is, by sowing a Seed of Jealousy and Prejudice in the Hearts of such in whom he can get an Entrance, that so they may cease from the true and unfeigned Love, and that upon a pretended Reason, because of this or that, which is supposed or imagined, in the evil Parts in themselves, against others, giving heed to evil Thoughts or Surmises, which break forth many Times in Whisperings and Tale-bearing; which, though

though the Thing supposed to be evil, was really so, yet this is not to be allowed or given way to among you, but to use Plainness one towards another, and single-heartedness, and to shut out the evil one in this his subtil Appearance also. Oh, *dear Friends!* remember how the Lord hath dealt with you, and deal you so one by another; he hath not sought Occasions against you, but hath long born and suffered, and exercised much Patience and Tenderness towards you, yet plainly reproving the Evil in you, and not treasuring it up against you. Oh *Friends!* be like-minded one towards another, that the Enemy of your Peace and Concord may be defeated, and you preserved entire to one Head, even to Christ Jesus, and ye may be one, and the Name of the Lord may be one among you; and that which tends to the making cold your Love, may be judged in all; and so Brotherly-Love will continue with you to the End.

Another Way which the Enemy works to scatter, and to bring from this *Unity*, is, by leading some, who have believed, into some Sin and Iniquity which the Body (who are in the Truth) are constrained to appear in Judgment against for the Truth's Sake; and yet notwithstanding the Parties so sinning being above the Witness in themselves, which would bring them to own the Judgment of the Spirit of Christ in his Church, they exalt themselves above the Judgment, and seek to gain to them such whom they can enter, by their Words and Complaints, to take part with them against the Judgment, and those who passed it. Such were those whose Words *did eat* (the Apostle said) *as a Canker*, of whom the

Believers

Believers in those Days were to be aware ; for commonly such as have gone from the Power that should have kept them clean and upright, will also turn against the Power in those who abide in it, especially if they be drawn forth to reprove and rebuke them : But let all such know, that is not the Way to be renewed ; and let all that take part with any who work Iniquity, know, that they do but defile their own Souls thereby, and rend themselves from that Body which they cannot prosper out of. And therefore, *dear Friends*, beware of joining with that, in yourselves or in others, which the Power goeth against, let the Pretences be what they will ; for that which doth Evil, will always be apt to sow evil Complainings of others ; and such as are in the unsatisfied Murmuring against Judgment passed upon them, are much to be feared ; for they thereby render themselves the more guilty, and yet the further from Repentance. But, *dear Friends*, watch unto that which gives you a living feeling of the living Body, which is the Church, that in all Things you may demean yourselves as true Members of it, serving one another in Love, and submitting yourselves one unto another for the Lord's Sake, that in all Plainness and Singleness, as becometh the Truth, you may seek to preserve the Unity which the Enemy of Truth and Peace doth envy ; so shall ye continue to strengthen one another's Hand in every good Work, and this shall tend to the weakening of the Hands of your Enemies, who seek to divide you, that they may rule over you. Many other Designs doth the wicked One try, daily to break and divide, more than can

now be named or here inserted ; but they are all out of the *Light*, and if you be in it, you will see them, and that will preserve you ; for it is one, and did make us one, and will keep us to be of one Heart and Mind to the End, if we abide in it.

3. The third good Effect which Truth did work in the Beginning, in those who did truly receive it, was ZEAL and FAITHFULNESS to God, in the bearing Testimony to what was manifest, tho' through great Sufferings ; in which, as Friends abide in the Root, they do daily encrease in Power, to fulfil the same Testimony ; for the Mercy of the Lord doth engage them, and his Answer of Peace in the Midst of their Trials, doth arm and encourage them, and they hold out to the End ; and for such the Lord hath always made a Way, better than they could have made for themselves : Yet the Enemy hath in this Matter also been very busy, and hath prevailed with some under divers Considerations, or rather Consultations, which he hath propounded unto them. But, Oh *Friends*, be ye all watchful, and take heed lest any of the Testimonies of Truth be laid waste ; for that which leads to be weary of bearing Witness to the Truth, and to lay it waste, the same will lay thee waste, and bring thee into such a State, as thou wilt want the Truth to bear witness for thee ; and though it be hard for Flesh and Blood (which hath no Kingdom but here) to fall into the Hands of unreasonable Men, yet it is a more fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God ; and therefore, let all lukewarm ones, who are neither hot nor cold, be awakened, and all who have gone backwards, be warned to *return to their*

their first Love, else the Lord will come against them, and the Day hastens that will divide such their Portion among Hypocrites, except they repent.

But to touch at some of the Reasons or Arguments which he, that abode not in the Truth himself, useth to draw others into this kind of treacherous Backsliding, observe as follows,

First, He appears to some to persuade them, That their *former Testimony* was born more from an Imitation of others, than from a Work of the Power of God in themselves; and that now, they not finding the Thing required of them, they may leave off their Testimonies, or may do such Things as they have denied formerly: This Snare doth the Enemy make use of in these Days. But mark who it is that he hath caught with it; none but such who sometimes were low in their Minds, and dared not to grieve the Spirit of God in themselves or others, but for the Truth's Sake could give up all Things, rather than their Testimony; but in Time growing careless and loose in waiting, lost that subject State, and grew high and exalted in their Minds above the Cross that should have crucified the betraying Wisdom; and so having lost the true Exercise of the Power, and the Feeling of the Excellency and Worth of the Truth, they knew not the Requirings of the Lord; and the earthly Mind got up, which placed a greater Esteem upon earthly Things, than upon Things that are eternal; and so Things that once thou offeredst up to God, thou takest again into thine own Hand, and so robbest the Lord, and growest careful about outward Things, as other *Gentiles* do; and to cover thy Shame therein, the

Enemy then tempts thee to belye the Power which once wrought in thy Heart, and made thee afraid to act against the *Light*, or to deny the Testimony for God in such Things as were manifest, and then thou sayest, *thou didst it by Imitation*; but thou shalt know thy Covering is too narrow in the Day that hasteth upon thee.

Another Temptation which the Enemy presenteth, is, That tho' thou art convinced *what to do*, or *what thou shouldst deny*, yet the Trials are so hard and so many, and Persecutors wax worse and worse, so that thou shalt not be able to hold out to the End; and where he can get Entrance with this Bait, he presently causeth an evil Heart of Unbelief and Doubting to arise, which takes away even the Strength that the Lord did give, and so Feebleness doth enter the Mind, and a Spirit of Bondage leads thee to fear again; and then comes the Dispute in thy Heart, whether thou *shalt stand* with the Power of God, in the Obedience, or whether thou *shalt fall* under that Power that ariseth against God, and his Truth and People? And in this Combat thou hast a subtil Enemy, using many Devices to betray thee, and a Part in thyself, not yet mortified, that is ready to say, *Pity thyself, pity thy Wife, pity thy Children, and pity thy Relations*; which it may be sometimes, are all as so many Instruments of Satan to seduce thee, and lead thee into Darkness, that thou mayst not see so great Necessity in thy bearing up thy Testimony as indeed there is, nor so great a Danger in the contrary as indeed there is.

Oh *Friends*! at such a Time as this, where is there any Help but in the *Lord*? Where canst thou find

find a Saviour, but in that *Light* which gives to distinguish the several Voices? Now it is good for thee to remember, that *If thou walkest after the Flesh, thou must and shalt surely die and wither.* In such a Time flee, flee to the Lord, wait in his Dread to feel thy Strength but renewed at the present, and take no Care for Strength next Month, next Year, or next Trial, for *God is God, and changeth not, and will be the same to thee in seven Trials as in six, if thou believest and waitest on him in Uprightness:* And therefore fear not Man, but trust in the Lord, all ye who have known and felt his Power, and let not in the Enemy of your Souls by the Door of *carnal Reasoning*, but keep that shut; and rather consider, how the Enemy makes thee as a Rejoicing among his own Children, and strengthens that Hope in them, of their overcoming all others, as well as thee; which Hope is cursed, and shall be confounded. And consider, that if thou lettest fall thy Testimony, which thou hast once born for the Lord, thou makest the Heart of the Righteous sad, and makest their Travail through that Testimony the harder for them, by reason of thy encouraging their Adversaries by the Hope aforesaid. And whatever thou dost, *They must go thorough to the End, who will inherit the Crown of Immortality.*

And again consider, It may be, that thy Back-sliding, or cowardly drawing away the Shoulder, may prove a Discouragement to others, and they may stumble in thy Stumbling, and fall with thee, and never be able to rise, and so thou bringest their Blood also upon thee. Oh! remember also that Servant of the Lord, who could say, *Psalms cxix. 157,*

Many are my Persecutors, and mine Enemies; yet do I not decline from thy Testimonies. That was a noble Spirit becoming the Soldiers of Christ; yea, *though persecuted by Princes*, as he saith, *Verf. 161.*

Dear Friends, let your Minds be stirred up to be zealous for the Lord, in this the great Day of Controversy with Darknes and its Power. Who hath God to bear Witness to his Name, but you? Among whom hath he made it known, as among you? Who have given up themselves to the Lord, as you have done? Well, *Blessed are they that keep Covenant with the Lord, for they shall see his Glory.*

One more subtil Snare of the Enemy in this Matter is in my Heart to mention, which is this, *viz.* To persuade thee for once to do that which the *Light* hath made manifest thou shouldst not, with a Purpose afterwards to be more faithful. Oh *Friends!* In the Name and Fear of the Lord I exhort and warn you all to take heed of this, for it will prove but a false Confidence; thou wilt find this kind of going out of the Guidance of Truth, to be a dear Out-going to thee, for if ever thou dost return, it will be very hardly, and with bitter Anguish of Soul. Oh! do not tempt the Lord on this wise, *lest it do prove impossible, upon thy sinning willingly, to renew or restore thee again by Repentance*; thou wilt have thy *Pottage*, but wilt lose the *Blessing*, *though thou may seek it with thy Tears*; for while thou *wentest out*, behold, thy *Way became hedged up*, and the *thorny Nature* got up in thee, and so thou art *debarred and fenced out* from enjoying thy former State; Sin being entred, Death soon follows. Oh! Remember *Sampson*, who when he had disclosed the
Token

Token of a *Nazarite*, in which State he stood in Covenant with God, yet thought to have shaken himself, and to have gone forth in his Strength, as at other Times, but was mistaken, *Judges xvi. 20. for the Lord was departed from him, though he knew it not.* And so, though thou hast known the Lord's Presence and Power in thy Vessel, yet take heed of letting in that treacherous Spirit, to lead thee to Unfaithfulness, and to betray the least of his Trusts and Testimonies committed to thee, though it be but for *once*; for thereby thou wilt render thyself unworthy to be found a Witness of his Power another Time; for the Lord will leave that Vessel, and often doth, and chuseth other Vessels to manifest himself in, who will be more true and faithful.

So, *dear Friends*, in true and tender Love I have laid these Things before you, that ye may all be stirred up and provoked to Love, and to good Works; that ye may abound in the Grace committed to you, and none of you who have known the Truth, may be entangled with the Wiles of your subtil Enemy; and that you who have begun well, may not lose the Things that ye have wrought, but may persevere in Well-doing till ye have finished your Course in Peace. And *Friends*, this is the Joy and Delight of those who labour among you in the Lord, and hereby are our Hands strengthened, and our Hearts refreshed, when we do find ye such as we desire ye should be, even stedfast in the Truth; and then also do you find us to you-ward, such as ye desire we should be, even a Refreshing in the Fellowship of Life unto you, and our God comforts us together in the mutual Joy

and Comfort of his holy Spirit, working in us and in you.

And *Friends*, I am the more drawn forth at this Time to visit you with an Epistle, because the Lord hath given me some Sight of his great and dreadful Day, and Workings in it, which is at hand, and greatly hastens, of which I have something to say unto you, that ye may be prepared to stand in his Day, and may behold his wonderous Working among his Enemies, and have Fellowship with his Power therein, and may not be dismayed nor driven away in the Tempest, which will be great.

And as concerning those *Succeeding Times*, the Spirit of the Lord hath signified, that they will be Times of Horror and Amazement to all those who have, and yet do reject his Counsel: For as the Days of his Forbearance, Warning and Inviting, have been long, so shall his Appearance amongst those who have withstood him, be fierce and terrible; even so terrible, as *who shall abide his Coming?* For the Lord will work both secretly and openly, and his Arm shall be manifest to his Children in both.

Secretly, he shall raise up a continual fretting Anguish amongst his Enemies, one against another, so that being vexed and tormented inwardly, they shall seek to make each other miserable, and delight therein for a little Season: And then the Prevailer must be prevailed over, and the Digger of the Pit must fall therein; and the Confidence which Men have had one in another shall fail, and they will beguile and betray one another, both by Counsel and Strength; and as they have banded themselves to break you whom God hath gathered, so shall they

they band themselves one against another, to break, to spoil and destroy one another ; and through the Multitude of their Treacheries, all Credit or Belief, upon the Account of their solemn Engagement, shall fail ; so that few Men shall count themselves, or what is theirs, safe in the Hand of his Friend, who hath not chosen his Safety and Friendship in the pure Light of the unchangeable Truth of God : And all the secret Counsels of the Ungodly shall be brought to nought, sometimes by the Means of some of themselves, and sometimes by Impossibilities lying in their Way, which shall make their Hearts fail of ever accomplishing what they have determined ; and in this State shall Men fret themselves for a Season, and shall not be able to see the Hand that turns against them, but shall turn to fight against one Thing, and another, and a third Thing, and shall stagger and reel in Counsel and in Judgment, as drunken Men who know not where to find the Way to Rest ; and when they do yet stir themselves up against the holy People, and against the holy Covenant of Light, and them who walk in it, they shall but the more be confounded ; for they shall be helped with a little Help, which all the Ungodly shall not hinder them of, *to wit*, the secret Arm of the Lord maintaining their Cause, and raising up a Witness in the very Hearts of *Isa. viii.* their Adversaries to plead their Innocency ; and this shall make them yet the more to vex themselves, and to go thorough hard-bested ; for when they shall look upward to their Religion, to their Power, Policy, or Preferments, or Friendships, or whatsoever else they had trusted in, and relied upon, they

they shall have Cause to curse them ; and when they look downwards to the Effects produced by all those Things, behold, then Trouble, and Horror, and Vexation takes hold on them, and drives them to Darkness ; and having no Help but what is earthly, and being out of the Knowledge of the mighty overturning Power of the Lord God Almighty, they shall despair and wear out their Days with Anguish. And besides all this, the terrible Hand of the Lord is, and shall be openly manifested against this ungodly Generation, by bringing grievous and terrible Judgments and Plagues upon them, tumbling down all Things in which their Pride and Glory stood, and overturning even the Foundations of their Strength ; yea, the Lord will lay waste the Mountain of the Ungodly, and the Strength of the fenced City shall fail ; and when Men shall say, *We will take Refuge in them*, Nahum iii. 12, 13. they shall become but a Snare, and there shall the Sword devour : And when they shall say, *We will go into the Field, and put trust in the Number and Courage of our Soldiers*, they shall both be taken away : And this Evil also will come of the Lord, and his Hand will be stretched out still, and shall bring Confusion, Ruin upon Ruin, and War upon War ; and the Hearts of Men shall be stirred in them, and the Nations shall be as Waters, into which a Tempest, a swift Whirlwind is entred ; and even as Waves swell up to the Dissolution one of another, and breaking one of another, so shall the Swellings of People be : And because of the Hardship and Sorrow of those Days, many shall seek and desire Death rather than Life.

Ah !

Ah! my Heart relents, and is moved within me, in the Sense of these Things, and much more than I can write or declare, which the Lord will do in the Earth, and will also make haste to accomplish among the Sons of Men, that they may know and confess, *That the MOST HIGH doth rule in the Kingdoms of Men, and pulleth down and setteth up according to his own Will: And this shall Men do before seven Times pass over them, and shall be content to give their Glory unto him that sits in Heaven.*

But, Oh Friends! while all these Things are working, and bringing to pass, repose ye yourselves in the Munition of that Rock which all these Shakings shall not move, even in the Knowledge and Feeling of the eternal Power of God, keeping you subjectly given up to his heavenly Will, and feel it daily to kill and mortify that which remains in any of you, which is of this World; for the worldly Part in any, is the changeable Part, and that is up and down, full and empty, joyful and sorrowful, as Things go well or ill in the World: For as the Truth is but one, and many are made Partakers of its Spirit; so the World is but one, and many are Partakers of the Spirit of it; and so many as do partake of it, so many will be straitned and perplexed with it; but they who are single to the Truth, waiting daily to feel the Life and Virtue of it in their Hearts, these shall rejoice in the midst of Adversity, these shall not have their Hearts moved with Fear, nor tossed with Anguish because of evil Tidings, *Psal. cxii. 7, 8.* Because, that which fixeth them remains with them: These shall know their Entrance with the Bridegroom, and so be kept
from

from Sorrow, though his Coming be with a Noise ; and when a Midnight is come upon Man's Glory, yet, they being ready and prepared, it will be well with them, and having a true Sense of the Power working in themselves, they cannot but have Unity and Fellowship with the Works of it in the Earth, and will not at all murmur against what is, nor wish nor will what is not to be ; these will be at rest till the Indignation passeth over, and these having no Design to carry on, nor no Party to promote in the Earth, cannot possibly be defeated nor disappointed in their Undertakings.

And when you see Divisions, and Parties, and Rendings in the Bowels of Nations, and Rumours and Tempests in the Minds of People, then take heed of being moved to this Party or to that Party, or giving your Strength to this or that, or counselling this way or that way ; but stand single to the Truth of God, in which neither War, Rent nor Division is ; and take heed of that Part in any of you, which trusts and relies upon any sort of the Men of this World, in the Day of their Prosperity, for the same Party will bring you to suffer with them in the Time of their Adversity, which will not be long after ; for Stability in that Ground there will be none ; but when they shall say, *Come join with us in this or that*, remember you are joined to the Lord by his pure Spirit, to walk with him in Peace and in Righteousness, and you feeling this, it will gather out of all Bussings, and Noises, and Parties, and Tumults, and lead you to exalt the Standard of Truth and Righteousness, in an innocent Conversation, to see who will flow unto that ; and this shall be

be a Refuge for many of the weary, tossed and afflicted Ones in those Days, and a Shelter for many whose Day is not yet over.

So, *dearly beloved Friends and Brethren*, who have believed and known the blessed Appearance of the Truth, let not your Hearts be troubled at any of these Things: Oh! let not the Things that are at present, nor Things that are yet to come, move you from your Stedfastness, but rather double your Diligence, Zeal and Faithfulness to the Cause of God: For they who know the Work wrought in themselves, shall *rest in the Day of Trouble; although the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines, the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields shall yield no Meat, the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls; yet these shall rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their Salvation.* Hab. iii. 16, 17, 18.

And how near these Days are to this poor Nation, few know, and therefore the Cry of the Lord is very loud unto its Inhabitants, through his Servants and Messengers, that they would prize their Time while they have it, lest they be overturned, wasted and laid desolate before they are aware, and before Destruction come upon them, and there be no Remedy, as it hath already done upon many.

OH LONDON! LONDON! That thou and thy Rulers would have considered, and hearkened and heard, in the Day of thy Warnings and Invitations, and not have persisted in thy Rebellion, till the Lord was moved against thee, to cut off the Thousands and Multitudes from thy Streets, and the pressing and thronging of People from thy Gates,
and

and then to destroy and ruin thy Streets also, and lay desolate thy Gates, when thou thoughtest to have replenished them again.

And, Oh! faith my Soul, that thy Inhabitants would yet be warned, and perswaded to repent and turn to the Lord, by putting away every one the Evil that is in their Hearts, against the Truth in themselves, and against those who walk in it, before a greater Desolation and Destruction overtake them.

Oh! what shall I say to prevail with LONDON, and with its Inhabitants! The Lord hath called aloud, he hath roared out of *Sion* unto them, but many of them have not hearkned at all, nor considered at all.

Well, Oh *my Friends!* (and thou, oh my Soul) return to your Rest, dwell in the Pavillion of the House of your God, and my God, and shelter yourselves under the Shadow of his Wings, where ye shall be Witnesses of his Doings, and see his strange Act brought to pass, and shall not be hurt therewith, nor dismayed.

Oh *my Friends!* in the Bowels of dear and tender Love have I signified these Things unto you, that ye may stand armed with the whole Armour of God, cloathed in Righteousness, and your Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace, and freely given up in all Things to the Disposing of the Lord, who will deliver us, not by Might, nor by Sword, nor Spear, but by his own eternal invisible Arm will he yet save us and deliver us, and get himself a Name by preserving of us; and we shall yet live to praise him who is worthy of Glory, of Honour and Renown, from the Rising of the Sun to the

the Setting of the same, now and for ever; *Amen,*
Amen, faith my Soul.

A P O S T S C R I P T.

Dear Friends and Brethren,

I H A V E something further in my Heart to communicate unto you, in dear and tender Love, and in Desire of your Preservation out of the Snare of your Adversary; and that is, To exhort you all to dwell in the pure Judgment of the Truth, which is a Defence upon your Glory; and let none bereave you of this, under any Pretence whatsoever; but as you come to a true feeling of the Life in yourselves, to which alone the certain Judgment appertaineth, so let this Life have Freedom, and stop it not from judging all that which is at Enmity with the Life, and tends to the hurting of the true Plant of God; for I have seen a Harm hath come to many who have parted with their Judgment, and so have become unarmed, and the Enemy hath prevailed upon them, (under a pretended Tenderneſs) to permit or suffer ſuch Things as were hurtful to themselves and others; and though the Lord hath given them Judgment and Discerning in the Matter, yet were bereaved of that Gift, and ſo by little and little became beguiled.

Oh dear Friends! Consider these Days are perilous Times, and it is needful for every one to
 180 watch

watch in that same eternal Light to which you were first turned, that by its righteous Judgment ye may be preserved from every Thing in yourselves, that appears contrary to that precious Life of which you have tasted: And when you have so done, then take heed, that the Enemy doth not do that by an Instrument, which (through your Watchfulness in the Light) he could not do without; and all beware of that affected Tenderness, that cries out, *Be tender to all, and pray for all, and mind the Good in all, and love all, and judge none, but leave Judgment to God, &c.* I say, heed not the plausible Words of that Spirit, which being guilty, to save its own Head from a Stroke, would bereave you of your Judgment, which God hath given you, and is indeed truly his Judgment, and is to be administered in his Wisdom and Power, for the cleansing and keeping clean his Sanctuary; for such as have no Judgment in their goings, are they who know not the true Way of Peace, but make them crooked Paths, *He that goeth in them shall not know Peace*, Isai. lix. 8.

But some may say, *Was not Christ meek and lowly? and ought not all to be like unto him?*

'Tis true, *my Friends*; but there is a Difference between the Seed's Suffering and its Reigning, and there are Times for them both: And when it doth please God to permit the Hour and Power of Darkness, in the open Persecutors, to exalt itself against his Seed and People, by Persecution or such like, they are led by his Spirit to appear in Meekness and Quietness, as a Sheep before the Shearer. But what is this to suffering bad and perverse Spirits, that appear under Pretence of the Truth, and yet are
out

out of the Truth, and Enemies to its Prosperity, striving to exalt and set up another Thing instead of the Truth? Such as these the Lord doth not require you to use only Patience and Meekness towards, but if that will not reclaim them, they must know the Judgment of the Truth, and you in it must stand over them; for in this Case the Day of the Exaltation of Christ is come, and God is crowning Truth with Dominion over every false Spirit, and corrupt Practice thereof.

And therefore, *dear Friends*, eye the Lord in his Goings forth, and as you feel his Life in you to witness against any evil and corrupt Thing or Practice, use Plainness and keep Sincerity, and turn not Judgment backwards; for that which is unwilling to be judged, and cries out, *Judge none, leave all to God*, &c. the same will take upon it both to judge and rule, but not in the Wisdom of God; and those who cry out so much for Tenderness, and against Truth's Judgment, the same are most dangerous to be drawn out from the patient Suffering in the Spirit of Christ Jesus, when they ought to appear in the most Meekness, and to appear rough and wrathful in the striving and fighting Nature, and are most apt to be tempted into a Spirit of Revenge, as hath been seen by sad Experience; for they who lose the Exercise of that by which all should keep Dominion over Deceit, they lose that Strength by which they should be enabled to suffer all Things for the Sake of Christ Jesus.

So, *dear Friends*, in that which keeps out the Defiler and the Betrayer, all wait upon the Lord, that you may have your Armour on, and be fortified

with the Strength, with the Might, and with the Judgments of God, and keep that under in every Place, which under pretence of Tenderness and Forbearance would make void the Testimony of Truth, or make the Offence of the Cross to cease in any thing wherein you have been instructed from the Beginning, that the Lord may behold and see Judgment established, and be pleased, *Isaiah lix. The Lord looked, and there was no Judgment, and it displeased him*; for thereby Deceit got up, which with it is to be kept down.

So the Lord God of Power and Wisdom preserve you faithful, and fitted for every good Word and Work; the Strong to watch over the Weak in Singleness, and the Weak to be subject to the Strong in the Lord, that so the pure Plant of Righteousness and Truth may grow in and among you all, to his Praise that hath called you: To whom be Glory and Honour for ever, Amen.

S. CRISP.

AN

A N
E P I S T L E
O F
T E N D E R L O V E
A N D
B R O T H E R L Y A D V I C E
To all the
Churches of C H R I S T
Throughout the
W O R L D,
W H O

Are gathered into the one living Faith,
and walk in the Light, and therein have their
Fellowship one with another.

From a Friend and Brother in the same Fellowship,
who hath long travailed, and still travails, for *Sion's*
Prosperity, and for the gathering *Sion's* Children out
of *Egypt* and Darkness, that they may walk and dwell
in the Light of *Sion's* Saviour, which is Christ the
Lord. Whose outward Name is STEPHEN CRISP.

L O N D O N :

Re-printed by LUKE HINDE, 1757.

EPISTLE

TENDER LOVE

BROTHERLY ADVICE

Churches of CHRIST



WORLD

WHO

Are gathered into the one living Faith,
and walk in the light, and therein have their
Fellowship one with another.

From a Friend and Brother in the same Fellowship,
who hath long travelled, and still travels, for Jesus's
Prosperity, and for the gathering Jesus's Children out
of Ayle and Darkness, that they may walk and dwell
in the light of Jesus's Savour, which is Christ the
Lord. Whole outward Name is STEPHEN CRIST.

L O W D O N :

Re-printed by Luke Hinde, 1757.

A N
E P I S T L E
 O F
T E N D E R L O V E
 A N D
B R O T H E R L Y A D V I C E.

DEarly beloved *Friends* and *Brethren*, gathered out of the World by the eternal Arm and Power of the mighty God, to bear his holy Name in your Generation ; my Love and Life in the Fellowship of the universal Spirit salutes you all, and my Prayer to God is, you may be kept stedfast and immoveable in the Grace of God, and in the Communion of his holy Spirit, that ye may bring forth Fruit in Abundance, according to the abundant Mercy and Grace bestowed upon you, to the Glory of God, and to your mutual Joy, Comfort, and Edification.

And that you may so do, let your Eye be kept daily to the Lord, and behold and take Notice of the wonderous Works that he hath wrought in you, and for you, since the Day ye were first quickened by his *immortal Word*, and stirred up to seek after

him, and to wait upon him ; how good and gracious he hath been to you, in bringing you from the barren Mountains, where your Souls languished for the heavenly Nourishment, where you knew not the Lord, nor one another, but were without a Comforter, or any to sympathize with you in your Mournings : Oh ! how hath he pitied your Groanings, and had Compassion on your Sighings, and brought you into Acquaintance with those that were in the like Exercises ; and then he taught you to believe on him who was able to help you : And those who were thus taught of the Father, and felt his drawing Cords of Love prevailing upon them, these came to Christ their Saviour, and in him began to feel a Unity one with another, in the Faith they had received in him ; whereby they believed he would give them of his Spirit to teach and guide them in the Way of Truth, Righteousness and Peace ; and thus was the Foundation of your holy Communion laid, and a lively Hope raised in each particular Soul, that he that had begun this blessed Work would carry it on ; and this Hope made you, that ye were not ashamed to make a publick Profession of his Name before the World, but cheerfully to take up his Cross, and deny yourselves of your former Pleasures, Friendships, and the Delights of this World : This Hope hath been your Support in the many sharp Trials, and bitter Combates you have had with the Enemy of your Souls Peace within, and with the Enemies of God's holy Way and Truth without ; and in all your Conflicts you have found him nigh at hand, to put forth his Power on your Behalf, as you have depended upon him for
his

his Assistance ; and by these Experiences of his Goodness, your Faith hath been strengthened ; and by the same *Word of Life* that quickened you, many more have been reached unto, so that you have seen a daily Addition of Strength in the Particular, and also an Addition to your Number, to your great Comfort and Encouragement ; and many have come to wait upon the Lord among you, and many are daily enquiring after the Way to *Zion*, with their Faces thitherward. These Things are worth your Remembrance, and serious Consideration, that you may look upon these great Mercies, as Obligations upon your Souls to walk humbly before the Lord, and to be devout and fervent in your Testimony, for that God who hath done thus great Things for you.

And, *Friends*, consider of the great Works that this mighty Arm of the Lord hath brought to pass in the general, as well as in the particular ; how many Contrivances have been framed, and Laws and Decrees made to lay you waste, and to make you cease to be a People ; and how have the Wicked rejoiced thereat, (for a Season) crying, *Ab, ha ; thus would we have it ; they are all now given up to Banishments, to Imprisonments, to Spoils and Ruins ; now let us see if that invisible Arm they trust in can deliver them.* Oh *Friends* ! How hath your God been your Support in the Midst of all these Exercises ? And when he hath pleased, how hath he quieted the sharpest Storms, and turned back the greatest Floods and Torrents of Persecution that ever you met ? And how hath he confounded his and your Enemies, and brought Confusion upon the Heads of them who

sought your Hurt : Were not these Things wrought by the Power of God ? Did your Number, your Policy, your Interest, or any thing that might be called your own, contribute any thing to these your great Preservations and Deliverances ? If not, then let God have the Glory, and acknowledge to his Praise, *these have been the Lord's Doings, and are marvellous in our Eyes.*

Again, *dear Friends*, consider how the wicked one hath wrought in a Mystery among yourselves, to scatter you, and to lay you waste from being a People as at this Day ; how many several Ways hath he tried, raising up Men of perverse Minds to subvert, and to turn you from the Faith, and from the Simplicity that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and to separate you from that invisible Power that hath been your Strength, and to separate you one from another ; and by subtil Wiles, to lead you into a false Liberty above the Cross of Christ ; and sometimes by sowing Seeds of *Heresy* and *Seditions*, endeavouring to corrupt the Minds of whom they could with pernicious Principles ; but oh, how have their Designs been frustrated, and the Authors thereof confounded and brought to nought ! and how have you been preserved as a Flock under the Hand of a careful Shepherd, even unto this Day ; which ministers great Cause of Thanksgiving unto all the Faithful, who have witnessed the Working of this preserving Power in their own Particulars.

Also, *my Friends*, it is worth your Consideration to behold, how that by this invisible Power so many faithful Watchmen are raised up upon the Walls of your *Zion*, that in most of your Meetings there be
Men

Men and Women, upon whom God hath laid a Concern to be taking Care for the Good of the Whole, and to take the Oversight upon them, to see all Things kept in good and decent Order, and to make due Provision for the comforting and relieving the Necessities of the Needy and Distressed, that nothing be lacking to make your Way comfortable; and these have not been, nor are brought under this Charge by any Act of yours, but God hath raised up *Pastors* and *Teachers*, *Elders* and *Deacons*, of his own Election and Choice, and bowed their Spirits to take upon them the Work and Service to which they are appointed for the Lord's Sake, and for the Body's Sake, which is the Church, to whom it may truly be said, as in *Acts* xx. 28. *Take ye heed to all the Flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers, &c.* And such ought to be hearkned to in the Discharge of their Trust, as those who must give an Account to him that called them, and gifted them for their several Works and Services in the Church.

And by these Ways and Means hath the Lord established among you a heavenly Government, and built as it were a Hedge about you, that ye may be preserved from Generation to Generation, a People fitted for the Glory that is, and shall daily more and more be revealed among and upon the Faithful, who delight in that Power that called them to be Saints, and to bear a Profession for the holy Name of God, against the many Names and Ways that Men in their changeable Minds have set up, that the Name of the Lord alone may be exalted.

And

And, *dear Friends and Brethren*, I intreat you, that the Consideration of these great and weighty Things which God hath wrought for you, and among you, may have that deep and weighty Influence upon your Souls, that ye may find yourselves engaged to answer the Love and Mercy of God in your Lives and Conversations, and in all you have to do in this World, that ye may shew forth the Honour of God in all Things, that the Light which hath shined in you, may shine forth through you unto others, who yet sit in Darknes; that all Men may know by your innocent and harmless Conversations, and by your close keeping to the Lord, that ye are a People who are assisted and helped by a supernatural Power, which governs your Wills, and subjects them to his blessed Will, and that guides and orders your Affections, and sets them upon heavenly and divine Objects, and that gives you Power to deny your own private Interests, where they happen to stand in Competition with the Interest of Truth; for these, and these only, will be found the true Disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, who can deny themselves, take up a Cross daily, and follow him in the Guidance of his regenerating Power, which brings Death upon Self, and crucifies the old Nature, with its Affections and Lusts, and raiseth up a Birth in you, that hath a holy Will and Desire to serve the Lord, and do his Will on the Earth; and such as these are Instruments in the Hand of God for him to work by, and these do Works of Righteousness, of Justice, of Charity, and all other the Virtues belonging to a *Christian Life*, to
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the Honour of God, and for the Comfort and Benefit of his Church and People.

And all you, *dear Friends*, upon whom the Lord hath laid a Care for his Honour, and for the Prosperity of the Truth, and gathered you into the good Order of the Gospel, to meet together to manage the Affairs thereof, Take heed that you have a single Eye to the Lord, to do the Lord's Business in the Leadings of his Spirit, which is but one, and brings all (that are given up to be governed by it) to be of one Mind and Heart, at least in the general Purpose and Service of those Meetings ; although through the Diversity of Exercises, and the several Degrees of Growth among the Brethren, every one may not see or understand alike in every Matter, at the first propounding of it ; yet this makes no Breach of the Unity, nor hinders the Brotherly-kindness, but puts you often upon an Exercise, and an inward Travailing to feel the pure peaceable Wisdom that is from above, to open among you, and every one's Ear is open to it, in whomsoever it speaks, and thereby a Sense of Life is given in the Meeting, to which all that are of a simple and tender Mind, join and agree : But if any among you should be contrary-minded in the Management of some outward Affair, relating to the Truth, this doth not presently break the Unity that ye have in Christ, nor should weaken the Brotherly-love, so long as he keeps waiting for an Understanding from God, to be gathered into the same Sense with you, and walks with you according to the Law of Charity ; such a one ought to be borne with, and cherished, and the Supplications of your Souls will go up to God for him, that God
may

may reveal it to him, if it be his Will, that so no Difference may be in Understanding, so far as is necessary for the Good of the Church, no more than there is in Matters of Faith and Obedience to God : For, *my Friends*, it is not of absolute Necessity, that every Member of the Church should have the same Measure of Understanding in all Things ; for then where were the Duty of the Strong bearing with the Weak ? Then where were the Brother of low Degree ? Where would be any submitting to them who are set over others in the Lord, which all tend to the preserving Unity in the Church, notwithstanding the different Measures, and different Growths of the Members thereof ; for as the Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets, so are the Spirits of all that are kept in a true Subjection to the Spirit of Life in themselves, kept in the same Subjection to the Sense of Life given by the same Spirit in the Church ; and by this Means we come to know the one Master, even Christ, and have no Room for other Masters in the Matter of our Obedience to God ; and while every one keeps in this true Subjection, the sweet Concord is known, and the Oil is not only upon *Aaron's* Head, but it reacheth the Skirts of his Garment also ; and Things are kept sweet and savoury, and ye love one another from the Greatest to the Least in Sincerity, and (as the Apostle saith) *without Dissimulation* ; and this Love excludes all *Whisperings of evil Things* ; all *Backbiting, Tale-bearing, Grudgings, and Murmurings* ; and keeps Friends Minds clean one towards another, waiting for every Opportunity to do each other Good, and to preserve each others Reputation ; and their Hearts
are

are comforted at the Sight of one another; and in all their Affairs, both relating to the Church and to the World, they will be watchful over their own Spirits, and keep in the Lord's Power, over that Nature and Ground in themselves that would be apt to take an Offence, or construe any Word or Action to a worse Sense than the Simplicity thereof, or the Intention of the other concerned will allow of.

And whereas it may often fall out, that among a great many, some may have a different Apprehension of a Matter from the rest of their Brethren, especially in outward or temporal Things; there ought to be a *Christian* Liberty maintained for such to express their Sense, with Freedom of Mind, or else they will go away burdened; whereas if they speak their Minds freely, and a Friendly and *Christian* Conference be admitted thereupon, they may be eased; and oftentimes the different Apprehension of such an one comes to be wholly removed, and his Understanding opened, to see as the rest see; for the Danger in Society doth not lie so much in that, that some few may have a differing Apprehension in some Things from the general Sense, as it doth in this; *namely*, when such that so differ, do suffer themselves to be led out of the Bond of Charity, and shall labour to impose their private Sense upon the rest of their Brethren, and to be offended and angry if it be not received, this is the Seed of Sedition and Strife that hath grown up in too too many, to their own Hurt.

And therefore, *my dear Friends*, beware of it, and seek not to drive a Matter on in Fierceness or in Anger, nor to take Offence into your Minds at
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any Time, because what seems to be clear to you, is not presently received; but let all Things in the Church be propounded with an awful Reverence of him that is the Head and Life of it, who hath said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them*; and so he is, and may be felt by all who keep in his Spirit; but he that follows his own Spirit, sees nothing as he ought to see it. Therefore let all beware of their own Spirits and natural Tempers, (as they are sometimes called) but let all keep in a gracious Temper, then are ye fit for the Service of the House of God, whose House ye are, as ye keep upon that Foundation that God hath laid; and he will build you up, and teach you how to build up one another in him; and as every Member must feel Life in themselves, and all from one Head, this Life will not hurt itself in any, but be tender of the Life in all; for by this one Life of the Word ye were begotten, and by it ye are nourished, and made to grow into your several Services in the Church of God: It is no Man's Learning, nor artificial Acquirements; it is no Man's Riches nor Greatness in this World; it is no Man's Eloquence and natural Wisdom, that makes him fit for Government in the *Church of Christ*, unless he, with all his Endowments, be seasoned with the heavenly Salt, and his Spirit subjected, and his Gifts pass through the *Fire of God's Altar*, a Sacrifice to his Praise and Honour, that so Self be crucified and baptized into Death, and the Gifts made use of in the Power of the Resurrection of the Life of Jesus in him; and when this great Work is wrought in a Man, then all his Gifts and Qualifications

tions are sanctified, and they are made use of for the Good of the Body, which is the Church, and are as Ornaments and Jewels, which serve for the Joy and Comfort of all, who are Partakers of the same divine Fellowship of Life in *Christ Jesus our Lords*; and thus come many to be fitted and furnished to good Works, which are brought forth in their due Seasons, for Edification, and building up the Weak, and for repairing the decayed Places, and also for Defence of them that are feeble, that hurtful Things may not come near them.

Oh *Friends*! Great is the Work the Lord hath called you to, and is fitting you for, who innocently wait upon him; and the Lord hath opened my Heart unto you, and laid it upon me to exhort and beseech you to have a Care that ye quit yourselves as ye ought, in what God requires of you; and for the more particular expressing what lies before me in the Matter, I shall set down a few particular Observations for your Benefit and Advantage; and my Soul's Desire is, that my Labour of Love may have a good Effect in all your Bosoms, that God may be honoured thereby. And, *Friends*, ye know the chief Business to which ye are called, in your particular *Men and Women's Meetings*, is contain'd under these two Heads, *Justice and Charity*; the first, to see that every one hath Right done him; and the other, to take Care there be nothing lacking to the *Comfort of the Poor*, who are made Partakers of the same Faith with you.

And when ye meet about these Things, keep the Lord in your Eye, and wait to feel his Power to guide and direct you, to speak and behave yourselves

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in the Church of God, as becomes the peaceable Gospel: And beware of all Brittleness of Spirit, and sharp Reflection upon each others Words, for that will kindle up Heats, and create a false Fire; and when one takes a Liberty of a sharp Word spoken out of the true Fear and Tenderness, it oftentimes becomes a Temptation to another, and if he hath not a great Care, it will draw him out also, and then the first is guilty of two Evils, *first* being led into a Temptation, and then *secondly*, he becomes a Tempter to others; therefore all had need to be upon their Watch, neither to tempt, nor be tempted; and let none think it a sufficient Excuse for them that they were provoked; for we are as answerable to God for evil Words spoken upon Provocation, as without Provocation; for, for that End hath the Lord revealed his Power to us, to keep and preserve us in his Fear and Counsel in the Time of our Provocations; and therefore if any Man through Want of Watchfulness, should be overtaken with Heat or Passion, *A soft Answer appeaseth Wrath*, saith the wise Man; and therefore such a Time is fittest for a soft Answer, lest the Enemy prevail on any to their Hurt, and to the Grief and Trouble of their Brethren; for it is the proper Duty of Watchmen and Overseers, to spare the Flock; *that is*, let nothing come nigh them that will hurt them; and wound and grieve them; nay, the good Apostle was so careful over the Flock of Believers, that if there were any doubtful Matters to be disputed of, he would not have them that were *weak in the Faith* at such Disputes; much less ought them that are weak, to see those that are strong, descend from
their

their Strength, and go into the Weakness where they are not able to bear, for that is certainly the Weak that cannot bear: Those that really live in the Strength and Power, they can bear even Burdens for them that cannot bear their own. The Apostle in the Place before-mentioned, when he sent for the Elders of *Ephesus* to *Miletus*, and left a Charge with them, before he said *Take heed to the Flock of God*, he said, *Take ye heed to yourselves*: And indeed we are none of us like to discharge ourselves well towards others, but by taking heed to ourselves, to be kept in that sober innocent Frame of Spirit, which the Truth calls for.

In the next Place, *my dear Friends*, when ye are called upon in point of Justice to give a Sentence of Right between Friend and Friend, take heed that neither Party get Possession of your Spirit aforehand, by any Way or Means whatsoever, or obtain any Word or Sentence from you in the Absence of the other Party, he not being yet heard: There is nothing more comely among Men than impartial Judgment; Judgment is a Seat where Interest, nor Affection, nor former Kindnesses may come; we may make no Difference of the Worthiness or Unworthiness of Persons in Judgment, as we may in Charity; but in Judgment, if a good Man, being mistaken, hath a bad Cause, or a bad Man a good Cause, according to his Case must he have Sentence: It was a good Saying, *He that judgeth among Men, judgeth for the Lord, and he will repay it*. Therefore let all be done as unto the Lord, and as ye are willing to answer it in his Presence; and although some may for a Time be discontent thereat, yet in

Time God shall clear up your Innocency as the Sun at Noon-day ; and they that kick at sound Judgment, will find but hard Work of it, they do but kick against that which will prick them ; and however such, through their Wilfulness, and their abounding in their own Sense, may hurt themselves, yet you will be preserved, and enjoy your Peace and Satisfaction in the Discharge of your Consciences in the Sight of God.

And as concerning *practical Charity*, ye know it is supported by Liberality, and where Liberality ceaseth, *Charity* waxeth cold, yea, so far ceaseth ; where there is no Contribution, there is no Distribution ; where the one is sparing, the other is sparing ; and therefore let every one nourish *Charity in the Root*, that is, keep a liberal Mind ; a Heart that looks upon the Substance that is given him, as really bestowed upon him for the Support of *Charity*, as for the Support of his own Body ; and where People are of this Mind, they will have a Care of keeping back any of God's Part ; for he hath in all Ages, in a most singular Manner espoused the Cause of the Poor, the Widow, and Fatherless, and hath often signified by his Prophets and Ministers, a special Charge upon rich Men that had this World's Goods, that they should look to it that they were faithful Stewards of what they possessed, and that they might be found in good Works, and might not suffer their Hearts so to cleave to uncertain Riches, as to neglect the Service God had given them the Things of this Life for, either to give them up when called for in a Testimony for his worthy Name, or to communicate of them to those that were in Necessity.

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Now as concerning the *Necessities of the Poor*, there is great Need of Wisdom when ye meet together about that Affair; for, as I said before, though the Worthiness or Unworthiness of Persons is not to be considered in Judgment, yet in this it is; and you will find some that God hath made *poor*, and some that have made themselves *poor*, and some that others have made *poor*, which must all have their several Considerations, in which you ought to labour to be unanimous, and not one to be taken up with an Affection to one Person more than another, but every one to love every one in the *universal Spirit*; and then to deal out that Love in the outward Manifestations thereof, according to the Measure that the Lord, in his Wisdom working in you, shall measure forth to them.

And as to those who by *Sickness, Lameness, Age*, or other Impotency, are brought into Poverty by the Hand of Providence, these are your peculiar Care, and Objects pointed out to you to bestow your Charity upon, for by them the Lord calls for it; for as the Earth is the Lord's, and the Fulness of it, he hath by his sovereign Power commanded in every Dispensation, that a Part of what we enjoy from him should be thus employed: The *Israelites* were not to reap the Corners of their Fields, nor to gather the Gleanings of the Corn nor Vintage, it was for the Poor; and in the Time of the Gospel, they were to lay a Part on the *First-day* of the Week, a Part of what God had blessed them with, for the Relief of those that were in Necessity; nay, they did not confine themselves in their *Charity* to their own Meetings, but had an universal Eye through

the whole *Church of Christ*, and upon extraordinary Occasions, sent their Benevolence to relieve the Saints at *Jerusalem* in a Time of Need ; and all that keep in the Guidance of the same universal Spirit, will make it their Business to be found in the same Practice of *Charity and Good Works* : *To do Good, and to communicate, forget not*, saith the Apostle : So they that forget not this *Christian Duty*, will find out the Poors Part in the Corners and Gleanings of the Profits of their Trades and Merchandizings, as well as the old *Israelite* did the Corners and Gleanings of his Field ; and in the Distribution of it, will have a Regard to comfort the Bowels of such, who are by the divine Providence of God put out of a Capacity of enjoying those outward Comforts of Health, and Strength, and Plenty, which others do enjoy ; for while they are Partakers of the same Faith, and walk in the Way of Righteousness with you, submitting themselves patiently to the Dispensation of God's Providence towards them, they are of your Household, and under your Care, both to visit, and to relieve, as Members of one Body, of which *Christ Jesus* is Head ; *and he that giveth to such Poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay it.*

But there is another Sort of *Poor*, who make themselves poor through their Sloth and Carelessness, and sometimes by their Wilfulness, being heady and high-minded, and taking Things in hand that are more than they can manage, and make a Flourish for a Season, and then, through their own Neglects, are plunged down into great Poverty : These are a Sort the *primitive Churches* began to be troubled withal in the early Days of the Gospel ; for the
Apostle

Apostle took Notice of some that would not work at all, and sharply reprov'd them, and said, *They that would not work, should not eat*; and these are commonly a sort of Busy-bodies, and Meddlers with others Matters, while they neglect their own, and run into a worse Way than the Unbelievers, while they profess to be Believers, yet do not take a due Care for those of their own Household.

The Charity that is proper to such, is to give them Admonition and Reproof, and to convince them of their Sloth and Negligence; and if they submit to your Reproof, and are willing to amend, then Care ought to be taken to help them into a Way and Means to support themselves; and sometimes by a little Help in this kind, some have been reclaimed from the Snares of their Soul's Enemy: But if they will not receive your wholesom Counsel and Admonitions, but kick against it, either in their Words or Actions, *Friends* will be clear of such in the Sight of God; for it is unreasonable in them, to expect you should feed them that will not be advised by you, because they break the Obligation of Society by their disorderly Walking; for our Communion doth not stand only in frequenting Meetings, and hearing Truth preached, but in answering the *blessed Principle of Truth* in Life and Conversation, and therein both the Rich and the Poor have Fellowship one with another.

There is another Sort that are made *poor* by the Oppressions and Cruelties of others. These oppressed Poor cry loud in the Ears of the Almighty, and he will in his own Time avenge their Cause; but in the mean Time there is a Tenderness to be extended to

them, not knowing how soon it may be our Turn ; and if there be need of Counsel and Advice, or if any Applications can be made to any that are able to deliver them from the Oppressors in such Cases, let all that are capable, be ready and willing to advise, relieve, and help the Distressed ; and this is an acceptable Work of *Charity*, and a great Comfort to such in sharp Afflictions, and their Souls will bless the Instruments of their Ease and Comfort.

And, *my dear Friends*, as God hath honoured you with so high and holy a Calling, to be his Servants and Workmen in this his great and notable Day, and to work together in his Power, in setting forth his Praise and Glory in the Earth, and gathering together in one the scattered Seed in this and other Nations : Oh, let the Dignity of your Calling provoke and encourage you to be diligent Attenders upon his Work and Service you are called to, and let not your Concerns in the World draw you from observing the Times and Seasons appointed to meet together ; but you that are elder, set a good Example to the younger Sort, by a due Observation of the Hour appointed, that they that come first one Time, may not by their long staying for others be discouraged, so as perhaps they may be last another Time ; but when the Time is come, leave your Business for the Lord's Work, and he will take Care your Business shall not suffer, but will add a Blessing upon it, which will do more for you than the Time can do that may be saved out of his Service.

And when you have to do with perverse, and forward or disorderly Persons, whom ye have Occasion to reprove, and to rebuke for the *Truth's Sake*, and
you

you find them stout and high, and reflecting upon you, then is a Time for the Lamb's Meekness to shine forth, and for you to feel your Authority in the *Name of Christ*, to deal with such an one, and to wait for the pure and peaceable *Wisdom from above*, to bring down and confound the earthly *Wisdom*. And in this Frame of Mind you labour together to pull the entangled Sheep out of the Thicket, and to restore that which is gone astray, to the Fold again, if you can; but if you cannot, yet ye save yourselves from the Guilt of his Blood; and if such do perish, his Blood will be on his own Head: But on the other hand, if ye suffer their perverse Spirits to enter, and their Provocations to have a Place in you, so as to kindle your Spirits into a Heat and Passion, then you get a Hurt, and are uncapable to do them any Good; but Words will break out that will need Repentance, and the Wicked will be stiffened and strengthened thereby, and you miss the Service that you did really intend. Therefore, *dearly Beloved*, keep upon your Watch, keep on your spiritual Armour, keep your *Feet shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace*, and the God of Peace will be with you, and crown your Endeavours with good Success, to your Joy and Comfort, and will bring up his Power over your Adversaries and Opposers more and more, to which many shall bow and bend in your Sight; and will bring Shame and Confusion upon the Rebellious, who harden their Hearts, and stiffen their Necks against the Lord, and his Christ, and Kingdom, which he will exalt in the Earth, notwithstanding all that Satan, and all his evil Instruments can do to hinder the

Growth and Progress of *his blessed Truth*; for of the Increase of the Government, and of the Peace of the Kingdom of Christ, there shall be no End.

And now, *Friends*, I having cleared my Conscience of what lay upon me for some Time, to write unto you by way of Remembrance, and as the Exhortation of my Life unto you, I remain travailing in Spirit for the Welfare of *Zion*: And although the outward Man decays, yet in the inward Man I am comforted, in beholding daily the great Things that our God hath done, and is still doing for them that have their sole Dependance upon him.

So committing you to the Grace of God, for your Director and Preserver, in these and all your several Services unto which God hath called you, that by the Operations of his mighty Power ye may be kept blameless and unspotted of the World, to his Honour and your Comfort, and to the universal Comfort and Edification of the Church, that so Praises and Thanksgivings may fill your Hearts and Mouths, your Families, and your Meetings; for he is worthy, who is our Tower, our Support, the Lord of Hosts, the King of Saints, to whom be Glory, Honour and Renown, through this and all Generations, for ever and ever, *Amen.* 25 SE 60

LONDON, the 15th
of the 7th Month,
1690,

*From your Friend and Brother
in the Communion and Fel-
lowship of the Gospel of
Peace and Purity,*

STEPHEN CRISP.





